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RUEHZN/ENVIRONMENT SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 ABUJA 000193

SIPDIS

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EEB/TPP/ABT for John Finn and Gary Clements

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [EAGR](#) [TBIO](#) [ETRD](#) [EAGR](#) [SENV](#) [PGOV](#) [NI](#)

SUBJECT: AGBIOTECH OUTREACH PROPOSAL FOR NIGERIA

Ref: 2007 State 160639

¶1. Summary. The Government of Nigeria (GON) has signed the Convention of Biosafety, participated in the Cartagena Protocol and has begun the legal framework for biotechnology legislation. FAS/Lagos has proposed an orientation program in the United States for GON regulators and lawmakers through the Cochrane Fellowship Program (CFP). The CFP only covers expenses within the United States. Post requests funding of \$19,200 to cover international travel. End Summary.

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Background

¶2. Overall, the GON appears to be supportive of biotechnology. In 1992, Nigeria signed the Convention on Biosafety and ratified in 1994. Nigeria was also an active participant in the negotiations that led to the adoption of the Cartagena Protocol, an international agreement on biosafety. In several public pronouncements, the Government of Nigeria has continued to express support for biotechnology. Despite this receptiveness, very little actual progress has been made in providing the enabling regulatory environment for the development of biotechnology in Nigeria.

¶3. In 2007, the Nigerian Biosafety Committee submitted a draft biosafety bill to the Minister of Environment. This action signals the beginning of a long process towards providing a legal framework for biotechnology in Nigeria. The next step is the Federal Executive Council, comprising the President and Ministers, who will consider the draft bill. If approved, the bill will be sent to the National Assembly (Congress) for public hearing and passage into law. At the National Assembly, the bill is expected to be referred to the Agriculture Committee for in-depth debate and consideration.

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Proposal

¶4. FAS/Lagos through the Cochran Fellowship Program has proposed an orientation program in the United States for select key lawmakers and regulators. The orientation program will highlight how products derived from agricultural biotechnology are considered in the U.S. food safety regulatory system. The proposed program is targeted for individuals and institutions that will play vital roles in the passage of the biosafety bill into law and its implementation. FAS has finalized a priority list of potential candidates by sector from the following government bodies: 1) Two or more members of the Agriculture Committee of the National Assembly who during consideration of the bill will be required to do a detailed study and make recommendations to the General Assembly. 2) The Director General of the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control, which is the statutory regulatory authority of the GON in the Ministry of Health. 3) The Director General of the National Biotechnology Development Agency (NABDA), the leading biotechnology

agency of the GON in the Ministry of Science and Technology. 4) A member of the Presidential staff. Nigerian policy-makers lack accurate information about the benefits of agricultural biotechnology and would benefit from this orientation to bolster their knowledge.

¶ 15. FAS/Lagos is very interested in collaborating with USAID Abuja and the Economic Section of the U.S. Embassy in supporting this vital orientation program. USAID through the Restructured Economy for Openness, Reform Macroeconomic Stability (REFORMS) Project will provide technical and financial support to the National Biosafety Committee to get factual information into the public domain about the benefits of modern biotechnology, and in underwriting and providing content for a public information campaign on the merits a bio-safety/biotechnology regulatory framework.

¶ 16. Generally, the Cochran Fellowship program does not provide funding for international airline tickets. Hotel, per diem and domestic travel inside the United States are normally paid for by CFP. Post requests State funding of \$19,200 to cover international travel. Post strongly feels that the orientation program will meet a number of U.S. policy objectives. Nigeria is a key country that the USG is targeting for active engagement with the medium term goal of establishing models for agbiotech trade and development. As part of their mission statement the NABDA has as one of its major aims food security, the creation of jobs and wealth, and sustainable environments. These are closely aligned with USG objectives such as the environment gains that can be achieved through decreased use of insecticides, reduced soil erosion, and stress the potential for improved nutrition and disease prevention.

¶ 17. Post sees Nigeria as one of the developing countries on the forefront of biotechnology which would benefit from the Cochrane Fellowship Program and supports Department funding for international

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travel to the United States.

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